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ARTICLE APPEARED ON PAGE E5.

WASHINGTON POST
29 May 1987

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Soviets Build Up Special Spy Force

Americans of a certain age grew up with stories of Japanese tourists before World War II whose snapshots included Pearl Harbor or other military targets in the background. Now it's Soviet tourists in Western Europe that the United States and its allies must beware of. They could be "Spetsnaz"—spies with a difference.

The Soviet Spetsnaz (special forces), who reportedly travel abroad disguised as tourists or truck drivers, are familiarizing themselves with the geography of NATO countries they may be called upon to infiltrate in the final hours before an East-West war—to assassinate Western leaders, carry out sabotage and otherwise create chaos.

Behind the smile of Mikhail Gorbachev and the sunshine of his *glasnost* (openness) policy, our intelligence sources say, is the fact that the Soviets have increased their special forces rapidly over the last two years. At least 30,000 of these intensively trained experts in behind-the-lines disruption are poised in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe for rapid deployment into the West.

"Evidence of this being a growth industry is both recent and convincing," says a briefing paper. "For example, new units have been created and others are increasing in size. Dedicated training facilities are receiving new training aids and equipment, including mockups of U.S. and NATO military systems. Numbers of personnel attending certain training programs have significantly increased.

"This trend appears to extend to the non-Soviet Warsaw Pact special-purpose forces also . . . . Collectively, these factors show the threat to NATO's rear area is growing."

The secret briefing paper adds that the KGB, with Gorbachev's blessing, has been charting "new roles and missions" for Spetsnaz, and that there are "new facilities under construction [while] existing facilities [are] improved."

The briefing presentation, which includes many slides, is being used to convince leaders from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization that the Spetsnaz forces are a threat that must be countered.

"These troops are recognized as posing a significant threat to NATO Europe, the United Kingdom and North America in wartime," the paper says, "and represent an important instrument of Soviet power projection in the Third World."

The Spetsnaz troops don't lounge in the barracks just because no war is threatening. "Peacetime missions include political security and internal political control," the briefing document says, "and political action and power projection abroad."

The paper adds, "In wartime, certain of the special-purpose forces are designed to operate behind enemy lines, independent of regular Soviet forces for extended periods of time." What will they be doing? "Conducting assassination, sabotage, reconnaissance and direct attack of a wide variety of key political, military and economic targets."

These jacks-of-all-trades are elite by definition. "Political reliability is a fundamental criterion for their selection," the document says. "Special-purpose forces include Ministry of Internal Affairs internal troops of special designation, KGB Department 8 assassination and sabotage teams and [military intelligence] special-purpose troops."

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